



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Division of Publications
Press Service



**EDITOR: THIS STORY IS SENT YOU FOR
EXCLUSIVE USE IN YOUR CITY.**

11/1/21

Release -
Immediate.

RAT, WORST ANIMAL ENEMY OF MANKIND,
CARRIER OF DEADLY DISEASES

NOV 12 '21

Intensive warfare on the rat has been declared by the Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, and the call has gone out for volunteers to help exterminate the pest. In urging swift death to the rodents, the department presents the following bill of particulars:

No other animal is so persistent or dangerous an enemy of mankind; no other succeeds in inflicting so great and continual damage.

A rat in the field, the house, the barn, or the store costs, on an average, \$2 a year to maintain.

There are as many rats in the country as there are men, women, and children.

Two hundred million dollars' worth of foodstuffs is devoured annually in America by the rat; an equivalent of 200,000 men devoting all their working time to producing the things the rat destroys or defiles.

Disease Causes More Deaths Than War

Aside from the economic loss and injury, the rat is a most efficient germ carrier. It frequents all the places that are vile and loathsome. The germs of the dreaded black death have killed more human beings than all the wars of the world's history, and these germs are introduced into the human system by the bite of a rat flea.

In India, no longer ago than 1896, the bubonic plague killed 9,000,000 persons. In Europe, during the fourteenth century, it is believed to have brought death to 25,000,000 human beings.

Other diseases, almost as dreadful, are traced to the common rat. Thus, from the standpoint of public health, as well as from the necessity of controlling the drain upon the public purse, it is essential that the rat be exterminated. Once the extermination is complete, or as nearly so as modern methods will permit, every precaution must be taken to prevent the rat from multiplying and regaining lost ground.

"Trapping should be done continuously and systematically at all rat-infested places," says the department. "Rat poisons, especially baits treated

with barium carbonate as recently developed by the Biological Survey, should be employed. In furthering the destruction of the rat, community or civic organization is of the greatest importance. It does no good to drive the rats from one cellar into the next if they are allowed to breed unmolested in their new quarters. When the campaign is made general the pest is allowed no rest and no opportunity to intrench in a new position. If one pair of rats is left they can reproduce the original number in a little while, as rats breed five or six times a year with an average of 10 to the litter.

"Along with extermination campaigns, preventive measures also should be employed. First among these is the protection of all food supplies. This is of prime importance. The removal and destruction of refuse is the next step in prevention, as abandoned dumps and piles of waste material furnish excellent shelter and food for the rats that have been driven from the houses and cellars.

Buildings Should be Made Rat-Proof

"All buildings should be rat-proofed by the liberal use of cement wire netting and tin. Rat proofing should be a prominent specification in all new construction and it should be applied to older buildings in the form of repairs. All drain outlets should be sealed with wire cages, or similar protective devices, and at the seaports, where the rat finds entrance to the country, the port authorities should see that all ships are fumigated and every precaution taken by means of hawser guards or otherwise to keep the rats from passing between ship and shore, or from one ship to another. These things should be required by State law and city ordinance.

"With the food supply locked away from him, and his shelter gone, starvation and exposure will add to the effectiveness of work with traps and poisons, and the menace of the rat will cease to be a real hazard against American lives and property."